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CMA says its aid to rebels will continue

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — The deaths in Nicaragua of two members of an anti-communist group won't deter the group from training and providing supplies to rebels in that Central American nation, the group's leader says.

"We plan on continuing the way we are," said Tommy Posey of Civilian Military Assistance.

Two of the group's members — Dana Herbert Parker Jr., who was on leave from the Huntsville police force, and James Powell III of Memphis, Tenn. — were killed Saturday during a helicopter flight inside Nicaragua from a base in Honduras.

In a news conference late Tuesday, Mr. Posey and others who organized or took part in the trip denied any ties with the U.S. government in their support of rebels fighting Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government.

"It was a mission of mercy, regardless of what the Sandinistas say," said Mario Calero, a Nicaraguan rebel living in Louisiana.

Mr. Calero, a member of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, a U.S.-supported rebel group, said the helicopter was unarmed when it was shot down in a battle area. The Nicaraguan government has said the craft was attacking the Tapasali Military School near Santa Clara, about 10 miles from the Honduran border.

Congressional Democrats demanded yesterday to know whether the U.S. government was involved directly or indirectly in the incident.

In a letter to CIA Director William J. Casey, Rep. Ted Weiss, D-N.Y., said, "I consider it your responsibility . . . to provide the American public with a full account of direct or indirect CIA involvement with the Americans participating in this weekend's raid."

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said he would ask the Senate Intelligence Committee to look into whether the two Americans took off from Honduran airstrips built or controlled by the U.S. government.

Mr. Posey, a Vietnam veteran and owner of a Decatur produce business, said Civilian Military Assistance was a volunteer organization operating on funds provided by its members to help supply food, clothing and other supplies to the rebels.

He said the group had sent about 2,400 pounds of medical equipment and supplies to the rebel forces. He said members collected $15,000 in equipment and 1½ tons of ammunition and sent some to Nicaraguan rebels and government troops fighting leftist rebels in El Salvador.

Mr. Calero said Civilian Military Assistance, based in Alabama and Tennessee, had sent about 15 people to Nicaragua.

Mr. Posey said the organization was formed in July 1983 by a group of men who met at gun shows and gun shops in the Huntsville area. "We have never tried to keep our organization a secret," he said.

Nicaraguan government officials formally protested what they say was a raid, saying two adults and four children were killed. Defense Minister Humberto Ortega called the attack "a new aggressive escalation against Nicaragua with major North American involvement."

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